



seattle art museum

seattle asian art museum

olympic sculpture park

May 26, 2004

Allison Ray
WSDOT Environmental Coordinator
AWV Project Office (Wells Fargo Building)
999 Third Avenue, Suite 2424
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ms. Ray:

On behalf of the Seattle Art Museum we are pleased to be able to offer the following comments of the SR 99 Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement. While we acknowledge the perceived necessity of this project, we also realize the once-in-a-generation opportunity to offer historic vision to unite Seattle's Central Business District with its Waterfront.

We believe that we can revitalize the Waterfront, increase opportunities for people and goods to move through Seattle in a systemic way, and simultaneously improve our economy and environment. It is through this visionary leadership that our next regional legacy can be created.

As a major cultural institution in Seattle, active since its creation in 1933, the Seattle Art Museum has sought to instill legacy leadership in major civics work projects. We believe the Alaskan Way Viaduct/Seawall replacement project to be such a project.

For 50 years the central Waterfront has been cut off from the economic life and traffic flow of the Central Business District. It is precisely this concern that has led SAM to design and develop the new Olympic Sculpture Park. It will transform a former industrial property into a vibrant new 8.5-acre park for art and people that is located at the northern end of the seawall and within the heart of Seattle's most urban neighborhood.

Located in Belltown, along the shore of Elliott Bay between Broad and Bay Streets, and eastward to Western Avenue the new open space will provide shoreline enhancement that improves public access to Elliott Bay and provides shoreline restoration so needed for migrating juvenile salmonids. Scheduled for groundbreaking in February 2005, the park

seattle art museum | 100 University St. Seattle, WA 98101-2902 TEL 206 625 8900 FAX 206 654 3135
seattle asian art museum | 1400 East Prospect St. Volunteer Park, Seattle, WA 98112-3303 TEL 206 625 8900 FAX 206 654 3191
olympic sculpture park | Coming to the Belltown waterfront
www.seattleartmuseum.org

SAM

location has already become an anchor for new development that will provide homes and a source of jobs for many. The project will substantially strengthen Seattle's waterfront tourism industry, and is expected to draw an estimated 600,000 visitors per year.

The new Olympic Sculpture Park will represent a considerable alteration to the landscape while at the same time incorporating the transportation infrastructure and safe pedestrian access to the Waterfront. The new park will link together three separate sites now divided by Elliott Avenue and the BNSF tracks. Since this new park will be opening free of charge to the public in 2006 – prior to any proposed viaduct construction commencing in 2008 – its presence should be more substantially considered in the Final EIS.

Accordingly, both proposed detours for SR 99 traffic – Broad Street Detour and Battery Street Flyover Detour – would pose considerable violations to pedestrian access and neighborhood connection to this newly completed major civic project. We would urge the FEIS to figure out how to divert traffic to create a publicly accessible and people-friendly waterfront prior to 2020, and to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the Olympic Sculpture Park that will showcase the natural and aesthetic elements of the State: its environment, its art, and above all its civic community commitment.

One particular feature of the Broad Street Detour – referred to as the Broad Street underpass beneath the railroad tracks – should be dropped in the FEIS.

During the fall of 2003, this element of the viaduct was thoroughly considered, analyzed, and determined to be inefficient, expensive and ultimately not necessary by the City/State Alaskan Way Viaduct team. That lengthy process, directed by Maureen Sullivan, determined that it was cheaper and more traffic-efficient to replicate the underpass with improved ramps at Elliott and Western. Accordingly, the FEIS should not assume the underpass as a pre-existing condition to construction. Rather, the FEIS should assume the 8.5-acre Olympic Sculpture Park at the north end of the seawall as a pre-existing park.

Sincerely,



Mimi Gardner Gates, Director